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Funding Spectrum Guide

(Indian Education for All, American Indian Achievement Gap and At-Risk)



The 2005 Regular and Special Legislative Sessions saw an increase in school funding. This new funding focused on three separate issues: 1) implementing Indian Education For All; 2) closing the achievement gap between Indian and non-Indian students; and 3) increasing quality educational opportunities for at-risk students. We offer this Funding Spectrum Guide to cover all three funding streams. It is designed to provide a snapshot of activities in which schools can meaningfully use this funding to meet the Legislature's intent. The Legislature has defined a free quality public elementary and secondary system to include Indian Education for All and the needs of at-risk and American Indian students. See Montana Code Annotated section 20-9-309(2)(c); (3)(d) and (e). This list is not exhaustive and is purposely open-ended. It is meant to spark discussion and imagination – the actual decision is a local one.

Change takes time and we should not expect that the mission of including Indian content in classrooms will happen overnight. It will take all of Montana's educators, working together over several years, to fulfill this promise. The key is to take small bites of the apple.

A good place to begin is to survey school staff to measure their content knowledge and readiness to teach about Indians. Meet the needs of the staff first. Teachers will need support to carry out classroom and instructional change so begin with increasing teacher knowledge. This can only happen with some form of on-going professional development that is designed to increase teacher knowledge about Indian topics.

A good beginning includes positive leadership. Superintendents and school board members must confidently and optimistically carry the message of Indian Education for All if implementation is to be successful. As such, leadership needs to understand the basis of Indian Education for All and the issues involved in Indian Education. This can only happen by taking the time to learn about the issue and taking advantage of professional development opportunities related to Indian Education. Find suggested conferences and books about Indian Education on the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education website: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/IndianEd/Index.html>

A good beginning also includes gathering accurate and authentic resources and materials about American Indians. Stock your library. Buy classroom sets of novels relating to American Indian issues. Set up a professional development library with books about Indian Education and education journals related to Indian Education. Find suggested resources on the OPI Indian Education website: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/IndianEd/Index.html>

Above all, do not fear trying new ideas or including new content. Implementing Indian Education for All is a big responsibility for Montana's educators. It can prove difficult because Montana educators are creating a historic and progressive model. Working together, however, we can make this constitutional promise a reality. This is our work and our responsibility. In the end, it is work that will lead to a better future for all of Montana.

Indian Education For All

All schools will receive funding, based on ANB count, to implement Indian Education for All. The funding should be used to integrate content about American Indians, with particular focus on information about Tribes located in Montana. Montana's Program Foundation Standards state, "Incorporate in all curricular programs the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and other cultural groups."

Closing The Achievement Gap

Some schools will receive funding for its ANB Indian student count to narrow the achievement gap between Indian and non-Indian students. Some schools will also receive funding based on its Title I count. This funding should include making classroom learning relevant through the use of culturally-relevant materials and instruction. It also means providing teachers with quality professional development that will help them effectively teach students who are often culturally-different and economically-different from themselves. School leaders should research, and purchase, programs that have proven effective at increasing student achievement and keeping students actively engaged and in school.

If your school receives a small amount of funding, think about creating cooperatives with other schools in the area to carry out this responsibility. Work with educators who have successfully implemented Indian content into their classrooms. Collaborate with tribal education departments and Indian educators. Watch the OPI Indian Education website for continuous updates and new information.

If your school is fortunate to receive a large amount of funding it would be paramount to develop a sequential plan for Indian Education in your district that includes integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum, a plan for K-12 Native language instruction, and ongoing job-imbedded professional development for your staff. Your students can have access to many types of accurate and authentic classroom and library materials. Your school board can implement well-developed and thoughtful policy around these issues.

If your school receives \$100 - \$1500

- Survey staff to find out immediate needs for materials, professional development and content knowledge of Indian history, Indian contemporary issues, etc.
- Survey students to find out their perceptions about your school, their education, and issues such as dropping out and academic rigor. See recommended survey tools on the OPI Indian Education website: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/indianed/admin.html>
- Inventory current library holdings and update your library with OPI suggested resources: American Indian fiction, non-fiction, poetry, anthologies, reference materials, tribally specific materials, DVDs, CDs, teacher guides, instructional aids, research, reference materials, etc. See the Resource Guide on the OPI Indian Education website: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/indianed/teachers.html>
- Offer professional development (on-line or in-person), presentations, or workshops for students or staff that corresponds to Indian Education for All, the Achievement Gap, or educating At-Risk students.
- Arrange student field trips to American Indian cultural or historical areas.
- Form community/school councils or organizations that focus efforts on specific school-wide issues or identified needs, ie: attendance issues, alcohol and drug issues, etc.
- Develop/refine local student assessments to determine proficiency with Montana content and performance standards specific to Indian Education for All content.
- Invite paid guest speakers to offer presentations or workshops for students or staff that corresponds to Indian Education for All, the Achievement Gap, or At-Risk students.
- Bring in consultants or experts that can discuss test taking strategies for standardized and other tests with your teaching staff.

If your school receives \$1500 - \$5000

- Provide on-site professional development that corresponds to Indian Education for All, the Achievement Gap, or At-Risk students.
- Develop a comprehensive professional development library for staff.
- Send staff to regional and statewide professional development focused on Indian Education for All. See Professional Development Opportunities on the OPI Indian Education website: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/indianed/teachers.html>
- Bring in consultants or speakers that have specific strategies for addressing American Indian students' learning needs.
- Support teacher visits to schools and classrooms that are currently implementing Indian Education for All throughout their curriculum or those that are utilizing effective programs or services to help with At-Risk students or the achievement gap.
- Set up groups or committees to review existing curriculum and resources.
- Based on district needs, combinations of any of the above recommendations from \$100 and up should be utilized.

If your school receives \$5000 - \$10,000

- Provide professional development on site or at other locations that corresponds to Indian Education for All, the Achievement Gap, or At-Risk.
- Provide tutoring, credit recovery programs, and summer school for Indian or At Risk students.
- Support staff to take Indian Education related coursework and/or classes offered by Montana institutions of higher learning.
- Create classroom learning trunks/footlockers for teachers to use and share.
- Develop an induction process for new teachers to the district that is inclusive of Indian education issues.
- Based on district needs, combinations of any of the above recommendations from \$100 and up should be utilized.

If your school receives \$10,000 and up

- Provide support for your teachers to research programs and curriculum and find appropriate material that they can best integrate Indian Education topics into their classroom.
- Because current research demonstrates that having one caring adult in the school community can make a difference in a student's life, provide stipends to teachers who serve as mentors and advisors to students throughout the year. Teachers can monitor student progress in classes, follow their attendance, build relationships with the student's family, and provide support and guidance.
- Create a teacher exchange with another school to travel and learn from colleagues in other settings.
- Create student exchanges, both on-line and in-person, with neighboring districts. The best way to break down myths and stereotypes is through interpersonal relationships.
- Provide support for research, assistance to teachers, and professional development.
- Include Indian content in the hallways and classrooms, including treaties and other historical and cultural documents, portraits of Indian leaders, and Indian artwork.
- Create teacher handbooks that include information about incorporating Indian topics into the classroom.
- Develop a comprehensive district plan for Indian Education for All.
- Based on district needs, combinations of any of the above recommendations from \$100 and up should be utilized.

